

DEVELOPING FRUITFUL AFRICAN-EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

HOW SHOULD UNICA APPROACH THIS?

UNICA RECTOR'S SEMINAR
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On 20 April 2021, the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU), in collaboration with UNICEF, hosted a high-level event on education under the theme: “Building Skills for the Future”

The partners affirmed that **Building international partnerships** will be critical to delivering on their collective agendas.

The AU-EU Higher Education Programme was initiated with a budget of €13 million, fully financed by the European Union.

In April 2024, The European Union signed programme funding of €245 million for various educational projects in Africa.



In a joint paper, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities (The Guild) say the scale of the common challenges faced, and the opportunities opened up through scientific and educational collaboration, require a new level of investment that goes well beyond existing collaborations in Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+.

They have called on the EU to provide €1 billion a year from budget support for the Africa-EU Partnership to strengthen African research universities in partnership with European universities.



ARUA and The Guild have also called for:

- The creation of accessible world-class infrastructure in Africa.
- The establishment of an African Research Council, to help African universities attract and retain world-class researchers.
- The creation of doctoral schools, to help significantly increase the number of top-quality scientists that will enable the strengthening of African universities in a sustainable way.
- Provision of co-funding to ensure early-career researchers can develop world-leading research agendas in the first years of their appointment.
- Strengthening the capacities of African universities through bespoke training and investment in systems appropriate to their needs.



For us to understand these calls, we need to first understand the Higher Education landscape in Africa.

There are various cases where there are

- OVERCROWDED CLASSES
- INEFFICIENT LIBRARIES
- MISSING EQUIPMENT
- DERELICT BUILDINGS
- VERY FEW STAFF WITH PHD'S

But there are also

- MANY FIRST-CLASS UNIVERSITIES
- MANY WORLD CLASS RESEARCHERS
- HUNGER FOR HE AMONG THE POPULATION



- There are about 1,300 recognised tertiary education institutions in Africa, half of which are private. This is approximately 9% of the world numbers.
- According to UNESCO, the gross enrolment rate in higher education in 2021 in Sub-Saharan Africa stood at about 9%, while in Northern African it stood at about 37%, with the global average about 42%.
- Only Algeria, Botswana, Egypt, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa and Tunisia have a tertiary gross enrolment rate of more than 20%.
- There has been a significant increase in PhD output, although precise continental figures are not available.
- Research publications have increased, but the number of researchers per million of population in Africa is still low at 198, compared to the global average of around 1,150.



WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS FOR AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS?

- THEY PROVIDE NEW PERSPECTIVES TO COMMON RESEARCH PROBLEMS
- THEY CAN UNCOVER NEW RESEARCH AREAS
- THEY ENHANCE ONE ANOTHER'S REPUTATIONS
- THERE IS A BETTER CHANCE OF ATTRACT FUNDING
- THERE IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE DATA, RESOURCES, & EXPERTISE



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE POTENTIAL OUTCOMES?

- STAFF & STUDENT EXCHANGES (ERASMUS+)
- COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH (HORIZON EUROPE)
- LARGE GRANT APPLICATIONS
- JOINT POSTGRADUATE DEGREES



SOME ADVICE

- DON'T ONLY LOOK AT UNIVERSITY RANKINGS FOR PARTNERS
- ENSURE REPRESENTATION FROM ACROSS THE CONTINENT
- CONSIDER EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS
- ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF AFRICAN PARTNERS
- DEVELOP EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS



SOME IDEAS FOR UNICA-AFRICA COLLABORATION

- SET UP A PANEL OF AFRICAN EXPERTS TO ADVISE UNICA
- CONSIDER PARTICIPATING IN THE ARUA 1000 PHD'S PROGRAM
- EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP A GROUP OF STRATEGIC AFRICAN PARTNERS
- EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

